



Maricopa County

News Release

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February 23, 2012

Food Safety partners, cooking success!

Maricopa County Environmental Services Department introduces "The Cutting Edge" Food Safety Program

Maricopa County Environmental Services department is proud to officially announce the launching of an innovative program that promotes food safety practices and rewards participating establishments for their food safety systems. The Food Safety Management Program and Award, known as "The Cutting Edge", encourages food industry operators to be more conscientious for their own day-to-day maintenance and responsibilities. All county food-related establishments have the opportunity to partner with Maricopa County in implementing a proactive plan and approach to reducing food-borne illness risk factors.

What's in it for participating businesses?

- Food Safety
- Awards
- Participation Recognition
- Public Recognition (Media, Internet Report, Twitter)
- Verification Visits by department's Environmental Health specialists

How do businesses participate?

The establishment must meet a series of County and program specific requirements and policies. Environmental Health specialists will be introducing this new program during their routine inspections throughout the year and will assist managers/owners/operators with the implementation. Information, as well as helpful resources and tools have been posted on the department's website (*please see further below*).

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"Many establishments will find that they have been already conducting most or some of the Standard Operational Procedures and requirements that are part of this program," said John Kolman, director with the Maricopa County Environmental Services department. "We're partnering in helping establish or expand each business' own food safety plan," Kolman added.

The program consists of three basic ingredients for food safety and success:

- 1.) Establishing policies
- 2.) Training staff
- 3.) Monitoring results

"We have been listening to the industry, to their challenges and needs, and have structured this program to help them sharpen their food safety management plan, and to make our inspectors' visits less time consuming while more productive," said David Ludwig, division manager with the Environmental Health division. "The main goal is to make food establishments even safer for County residents while strengthening our joint efforts to help prevent food-borne illnesses."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that each year roughly 1 out of 6 Americans (or 48 million people) gets sick, 128,000 are hospitalized, and 3,000 die from food-borne diseases.

Additionally, according to the National Restaurant Association (NRA), each incident of food-borne illness may cost each establishment approximately \$75,000. All these factors stress the importance of implementing effective food safety management systems.

The public is also welcomed to join in encouraging food establishments to learn and participate in this new "Cutting Edge" program.

For more information on the Food Safety Management Program or "The Cutting Edge", please visit one any of the Maricopa County Environmental Services department regional offices. You may also call (602) 506-6616, or visit esd.maricopa.gov.

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For more than 50 years, Maricopa County Environmental Services department has been working with our community to ensure a safe and healthy environment. The department serves the nation's fourth largest county with a population of nearly 4 million people. Using innovative methods, our Environmental Health professionals take proactive steps to regulate the food safety in eating and drinking establishments, work with stakeholders to keep our water supply free from contamination, and provide surveillance/enforcement activities to help minimize vector borne health risks.

*To find out more, visit esd.maricopa.gov or call (602) 506-6616. Follow us on Twitter: <http://twitter.com/mcenviro>
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